



Neighborhood Networks Centers: Helping Build Safe, Attractive Communities Nationwide

Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide are providing services, programs and community organizing in an effort to increase safety and engender community pride. For example, a center in Columbus, OH, serving approximately 3,000 residents, provides educational and recreational activities for youth in the community. The center offers arts and crafts classes, meals, field trips and after-school tutoring. These activities allow youth the opportunity to participate in constructive activities and remain off the streets. In 1997, the governor of Ohio praised the center for its youth-related programs and activities. According to articles published in the *Columbus Dispatch*, the center contributed to the 40 percent drop in overall crime for the neighborhood.

What are community improvement activities?

Community improvement activities can be any type of action that improves the safety, beauty and well-being of a neighborhood or provides opportunities for residents to join together for the benefit of the whole community. These are some typical community improvement activities:

- **Public safety**
 - Community policing
 - Neighborhood watch
 - Youth and violence prevention programs
- **Beautification**
 - Community gardening and arts projects
 - Park and neighborhood clean up days
 - Home and school rehab programs
- **Community Building and Empowerment**
 - Voter registration drives
 - Community action days
 - Parades and street festivals

What is the connection between Neighborhood Networks centers and community improvement activities?

Neighborhood Networks reaches into hundreds of communities nationwide. Above and beyond providing economic and learning opportunities for residents of HUD-assisted

and/or -insured housing, Neighborhood Networks centers have the opportunity to serve as community hubs. Some centers are already engaged in community improvement activities. For example:

- A center in Omaha, NE, has a drug and gang awareness program.
- Another Nebraska center sponsors a neighborhood watch program.
- By participating in a community garden, residents at a center in Greeley, CO, grow their own fresh produce while contributing positively to the physical appearance of the community.

Neighborhood Networks Facts...

WHAT: Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995 that encourages the development of resource and computer learning centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 620 centers in operation*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 744 properties with centers in planning*

WHO: Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

*as of 08/00

- Building community, having fun and making others smile is what seniors at a center in Benton, Kentucky had in mind when they formed a band using kitchen pans and utensils as musical instruments. Often, they travel up to 50 miles to perform at retirement communities, social service events and award ceremonies.

Who is involved in community improvement and what are the benefits?

- **Residents and center staff** can help plan and organize activities and build community interest. These activities can mean increased recognition for the center and higher levels of resident participation. In addition, residents take more pride in themselves and their communities.
- **Nonprofit and community organizations** can offer resources, provide technical assistance and identify sources of funding. These organizations are able to fulfill their missions and goals, achieve community recognition and build new partnerships.
- **Local businesses** can provide sponsorship, food and prizes. In doing so, they gain public recognition and provide an important public service.

What organizations provide funding or technical assistance for community improvement activities?

Government agencies, nonprofits and associations provide financial and technical assistance for a variety of community improvement activities. National associations such as the **American Community Gardening Association (ACGA)** (www.communitygarden.org) and the **National Sheriffs' Association (NSA)** (www.sheriffs.org), sponsor of the Neighborhood Watch program, provide information and links to a network of

people and resources sharing a common goal. Local agencies may best understand their community's needs and often can provide more tailored assistance. For example, **Garden Resources of Washington (GROW)**, a Washington, DC-based organization, provides Washington, DC, residents with gardening tools and volunteers to help communities transform empty lots into beautiful gardens.

Identifying Needs

Since community improvement encompasses a broad range of activities, some form of planning to narrow the scope and target needs is important. Talking to residents, community leaders and law enforcement officials will help target community improvement efforts.

Want to find out more about starting or participating in Neighborhood Networks community improvement activities? Please contact us. Here's how:

✉ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Neighborhood Networks
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Fairfax, VA 22031-1207

Website www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

e-mail mail@neighborhoodnetworks.org

☎ Neighborhood Networks Information Center
(888) 312-2743

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